Wii games 'help control diabetes'

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Playing "active" computer games can help people with type-2 diabetes better control their blood sugar, a medical trial has indicated.

Researchers recruited 220 diabetic patients for their study and asked half to use Nintendo's Wii Fit Plus for half an hour a day over three months.

The gamers not only lost weight but also achieved lower glucose levels.

When the other group later switched to play the Wii they had similar benefits, BMC Endocrine Disorders reports.

Experts said exercise in any shape or form could be good, but that some activities would offer greater benefits than others.

Being active is particularly important for people with diabetes. It helps the body use insulin more efficiently as well as stay generally fit and keep a healthy weight.

For some, exercising and sticking to a healthy diet may be enough to keep diabetes in check.

Prof Stephan Martin and colleagues from the West German Centre for Diabetes and Health, who carried out the study, say exercise computer games offer an alternative way to get people physically active.

But they also note that getting people to stick at it could be harder - a third of their study participants dropped out of the trial.

Those who did persevere saw significant improvements in a measure of blood sugar control called HbA1c.

And they reported improvements in wellbeing and quality of life.

Dr Richard Elliott, of Diabetes UK, said: "Physical activity and a healthy balanced diet, along with taking doctor-prescribed medications if necessary, can help people with type-2 diabetes to control their condition and minimise their risk of diabetes related complications over time.

"To make physical activity part of your daily routine it's important to find an approach that works for you and is enjoyable, as this will make it easier to keep active in the long run.

"Computer games that promote a healthy lifestyle might be one way to achieve this, but different forms of physical activity might work better for different people. Further research will be needed to identify the long-term effects of such games compared to other approaches."

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